



Health Bulletin:

What Older Adults Should Know About Dehydration

A Health Bulletin on Issues of Pressing Interest to All Madisonians

Volume 1

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO DRINK ENOUGH FLUIDS?

Water is the nutrient needed in the greatest amount by your body. Dehydration occurs when your body does not have enough water to function well.

Water has many roles in your body, including:

- Boosts physical and mental endurance
- Prevents constipation
- Decreases risk of infection, including pneumonia and urinary tract infection
- Maintains healthy skin
- Prevent cramps and stiffness in joints



WARNING SIGNS/SYMPTOMS OF DEHYDRATION

- Dry Mouth or Eyes
- Tired or Fatigued
- Confusion
- Decreased Urination or Dark Colored Urine
- Muscle Cramps or Weakness
- Dizziness When Changing Positions
- Skin is Less Firm than Usual
- Sunken Eyes or Vision Changes
- Fever, Vomiting or Diarrhea
- Unexplained Weight Loss
- Higher Breathing and Pulse Rates
- Thirst



WHY DO OLDER PEOPLE GET DEHYDRATED?

Older adults are at risk for dehydration because:

- Body water stores are lowered = less water in the body
- Sense of thirst decreases = less desire to drink
- Medications (for example: diuretics and laxatives) alter body fluid levels

DID YOU KNOW?

Dehydration is the most common cause of hospitalization for people over 65.

LIQUID FOR LIFE

To stay healthy, it is important to take in enough liquids. Dehydration occurs when your body does not have enough water to function well. **Experts recommend 6-8, 8 ounce glasses of liquid per day.**

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Drinking 6 or more 8 oz. glasses of non-caffeinated fluid a day may sound difficult but here are some ways to help.

Try a variety of drinks:

- Milk
- Juice
- Flavored drinks such as lemonade or sports drinks
- Decaf coffee, tea and soda

Try water with a flavor:

- Add lemon or orange or lime slices
- You can even add cucumber or whatever makes it taste better



Drink a full glass of water when you take your medicines.

Keep a glass of water within easy reach.

Have water on the table when you eat a meal.

Eat fruit ices, ice milk, sherbets, Popsicles® or Jell-O®.

Eat foods high in liquid such as soup, custard, watery fruits and vegetables, stewed fruit, yogurt.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many foods have high water content. Lettuce, cucumber, celery and watermelon are 95% water. Skim milk is 91% water and a banana is 74% water.

SOME HEALTH PROBLEMS LINKED TO DEHYDRATION

- Vision problems
- Decreased Mobility
- Dementia
- Incontinence
- Difficulty Swallowing
- Depression or loss of interest in self-care
- Chronic diseases involving the kidney, heart or circulation
- Lack of balance

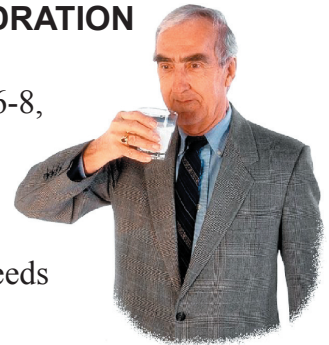


DID YOU KNOW?

Drinking fluid can actually help strengthen bladder muscles to decrease urinary accidents!

PREVENTING DEHYDRATION

- Experts recommend 6-8, 8 oz. glasses of fluid per day.
- In very hot or cold weather your body needs more fluids.
- When you are sick with colds or flu, your body needs more fluids.
- When you drink alcohol and caffeine drinks your body loses fluid.



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